

MEDIASCAN TRANSCRIPT
NBC MEET THE PRESS
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Sunday

KALB: I am Marvin Kalb, inviting you to Meet the Press with two military men who have two different views on the need for an MX missile, Gen. Brent Scowcroft and Adm. Stansfield Turner. Meet the Press, an unrehearsed press conference, is a public affairs presentation of NBC News. Our guests on Meet the Press both come from the military, but they do not agree on the controversial MX missile, whether the United States really needs one. Congress is expected to vote yes or no, probably with qualifications, within the next several days. Air Force Gen. Brent Scowcroft now retired, headed a presidential commission which recently recommended deploying 100 MX missiles. He was President Ford's National Security Adviser. Adm. Stansfield Turner, also retired, headed the Central Intelligence Agency in the Carter administration. He opposes the MX deployment, feels the U.S. ought to rely on Cruise missiles. Our reporters today are Mary Lord of Newsweek, Bruce Neland of Time, and to open the questioning, Bill Monroe of NBC News.

MONROE: Gen. Scowcroft, your commission has recommended we first build 100 new MX missiles with 10 warheads each, then a few years later move toward a different strategy based on a small so-called Midgetman missile with only one warhead. If small missiles are better for the long run, why put \$17 billion now into new big missiles? SCOWCROFT: Mr. Monroe, the recommendations of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces had three parts. You've discussed two of them. The third part is to integrate arms control with our strategic weapons programs and to move both in the direction of greater stability. We think that the three parts of that program are each essential to the success of the program, and we feel that, in order to have a small missile which has the environment most compatible with it, that the MX, for a number of reasons, is an essential part of that program.

MONROE: Why is the MX essential? If we're going in the long run toward a long-range strategy of small missiles, why build the MX now at a cost of \$17 billion? What does it do? SCOWCROFT: It does several things. Prominent among those are: first, it demonstrates U.S. national will and cohesion. We have now had four presidents who have said that the MX is important, if not essential, to our national security. To step back from that now, as a country, would send signals which could undermine one of the two essential aspects of deterrence, that is, national will. Whatever, you think about the overall strategic balance in addition, there is an asymmetry in ICBM forces. That is, the Soviet Union, because of their large numbers of ICBMs, the large warheads and their accuracy, are able to put our strategic forces at risk in a way that we cannot in any way reciprocate. We believe that's an element of instability.

MONROE: In view of the gap, admiral, that Gen. Scowcroft has mentioned -- the Soviets have much more striking power in their land-based missiles, and that threatens our land-based missiles -- why wouldn't it help for us to even that gap by building our own, big, new modern missiles. TURNER: I don't think there is a real gap. The general made a slight error in his statement as he talked about our strategic forces are vulnerable. Only our ICBM, our land-based strategic missiles, are vulnerable. We have been much more farsighted than the Soviets. We've only put 25%, roughly, of our total strategic forces in land-based missiles. The Soviets have put 75%. Yes. All of our 25% of land-based missiles is vulnerable today. But we can make an equal amount of the Soviet missiles vulnerable today too. If the president decided to pull

the trigger this afternoon, 25% of the Soviet's total force would be dead. So we don't have a real gap here.

KALB: Mr. Neland?

NELAND: Gen. Scowcroft, even leaving aside the question of the vulnerability of the missile, are 100 MX missiles really sufficient to make any difference? Do they really threaten the Soviets in any significant way that would make them behave differently? SCOWCROFT: Well, that's one of the last elements of the need for the MX I was going to address, was its use in bringing the Soviets to negotiation in a way which would permit us and hopefully facilitate them, encourage them to move in the direction of a small, single warhead missile. Now, there is nothing magic about the number 100. We wanted a number that was less than what I would call a full first-strike capability against the Soviet Union, but a number great enough that its deployment would be seen as a gesture of confidence, not of weakness.

NELAND: Is it essentially a political, or a negotiating ploy, then? I'm resisting the term bargaining chip. SCOWCROFT: I think it is not a bargaining chip or negotiating ploy as such. I don't think we ever should deploy weapons which we do not feel we need simply in order to trade them away. Nevertheless, I think for any of our weapon systems, if we can achieve a degree of security by getting rid of them on agreement with the Soviet Union, as by keeping them, then certainly any one of them ought to be available for negotiation.

KALB: Miss Lord?

LORD: Adm. Turner, the general has just made a good point about the need for national unity, and the need to bring the Soviet Union around to looking at single warheads. How do you then say that the MX is not necessary? TURNER: I think it's inconsistent, Miss Lord, to say we want to drive the Soviets to a single warhead small missile and we go out and build a large multi-warhead missile. I don't know how that connects. I just think that there are such risks in building the MX that it may go the opposite direction. Mr. Ustinov, the defense minister in the Soviet Union, said just the other day, 'If the White House challenges us by beginning deployment of the MX missile, then the Soviet Union will respond to this by developing a new missile of the same class.' We run the risk of starting a race in these big missiles rather than driving the Soviets to drop these big ones and go to small ones.

*NELAND: General, let me interrupt here. Isn't it true that the Russians are already....LORD: Yeah. NELAND: ...testing at least one or possibly even two new missiles? SCOWCROFT: That's absolutely correct, and I think that we will almost force them to deploy and build those missiles if we go to this direction.

LORD: But isn't there a perverse incentive there? I mean, if we built up a little bit, couldn't we then both build down, rather than having a mismatch which people say is so destabilizing? TURNER: I just doubt that you're going to get much in trade from the Soviet Union, for a paper missile which we have not deployed when they've got these big missiles they've already deployed. It's not a very good bargaining chip.

LORD: General, how would you respond to that? SCOWCROFT: I would respond that it is essential. We're not talking about a paper missile. We're talking about a determination to deploy it. One does not have to have a malevolent view of the Soviet Union to feel that, in view of the favorable posture they have in ICBM forces, that they're unlikely to give that up without some incentive to do so.

KALB: Mr. Monroe?

MONROE: I'd like to ask each of you, starting out with Gen. Scowcroft, to what extent is the MX a first-strike missile? Does it give us the capacity to wipe out most or all of the Soviet's land-based missiles, and is that a good idea for us to have a capacity that is first-strike or something close to first-strike? SCOWCROFT: The United States procures its strategic forces for the purpose of deterrence. The MX, in large numbers, could be a first-strike weapon. We feel that a hundred clearly is not a first-strike weapon. And, under most kinds of scenarios of the initiation of nuclear war, very unlikely under any scenario that those forces would be available and not in a first-strike call.

MONROE: Admiral? TURNER: Well, the problem is that because we have not been able to find any way to deploy the MX that won't leave it vulnerable, you can only use it in one of two forms. You can use it as a first-strike weapon. You can initiate the war. I don't think the United States ever will. Or you can use it as what we call a counter-punch weapon, that is you can try to launch it in that 30 minute interval while the Soviet weapons are en route to you if they initiate the war. That's very dangerous. So therefore, whether we actually build a first-strike capability with a hundred MXs or not, the Soviet Union is going to interpret it as our wanting a capability for a first-strike. That's going to put their finger on the trigger so they can counter punch. And if we build the MX, we're going to be on a hair-trigger response, also, because it's vulnerable. And we'll be worried that it will be knocked out. I think it's very dangerous for both superpowers to be sitting there with their finger on the trigger, so to speak.

MONROE: You seem to be agreeing with the General that 100 MXs do not constitute a first-strike capacity? TURNER: Added to our existing force, they begin to come close to it, but not a real first-strike capability in themselves.

MONROE: General? SCOWCROFT: I would just like to add that at the present time and for some time in the future, our bomber forces and our ICBM forces contribute what I would call synergistic survivability to each other in that the Soviets have to attack those forces with different forces of their own, and therefore, for some time in the future cannot attack them simultaneously, so that they add, each to the other, a substantial measure of protection.

MONROE: General, when you talked about a hundred, as a number, that sounds to me like a compromise figure. Why not 75 or a hundred and fifty? And if it's a compromise, it means that you had politics in mind when you came up with the number of a hundred? Isn't that right? SCOWCROFT: No. As I said, there's nothing particularly magic about a hundred. We did not want to recommend a sufficient number that would or could constitute a full first-strike capability nor a number low enough that it would demonstrate weakness rather than strength. A hundred happens to be the number that the administration proposed in its last recommendation for deployment of the MX. It's down from 200 proposed by the Carter administration.

MONROE: Yeah, but maybe the Russians think of 100 as the destabilizing number, and you're applying a kind of American logic to the Kremlin. Will it work? SCOWCROFT: I think it will. I think the Soviets can calculate what can be done with those warheads as well as we can.

KALB: Mr. Neland?

NELAND: Adm. Turner, we're sometimes warned by our European allies that if we don't deploy MX, they will not permit the deployment of Pershings and Cruises on their territory. Is this a significant calculation for us to make? TURNER: I think you have to consider it. But I would suggest that it was the Europeans who first asked for Pershings and Cruise missiles on their territory. If today, because of what we do with our strategic force, they decide they don't want to be defended by Pershings and Cruise missiles, we would be very foolish to deploy them. It's the European decision, not dependent upon what we do here. If they want to defend themselves, and they think that's the way to do it, we've offered to help. We certainly don't want to offer that help if they don't want it. It's their Europe, not ours.

NELAND: You wouldn't see that as a double loss for the U.S., then? No MXs here, and no Cruisers and Pershings there? TURNER: No, I wouldn't see that as a double loss at all. The Pershings have one great value though. They are the big bargaining chip for the Soviet Union. They are one of the things the Soviets really fear. And I think that's where we should concentrate on giving the president leverage, not by giving him an MX for bargaining purposes.

KALB: Miss Lord? LORD: All this wrangling, commission forming, problem solving seems to deal with the vulnerability of our land-based forces. What is wrong, as some experts have said, with going to a totally undersea or bomber force, de-emphasizing land base to the point of extinction, and then going from there? SCOCROFT: The multiplicity of our forces, the so-called triad of bombers, submarine forces and ICBMs, exists for several reasons. The fundamental need for different kinds of forces is in the event of a breakthrough against any one of them, we would not simply be paralyzed. I think we're extremely fortunate at the present time, for example, to have a submarine fleet that is essentially invulnerable to Soviet attack. If it were not so, our present problems with the MX would be much more serious. TURNER: I agree very much with the general that we must keep a mix of forces. But we have our submarines, and I would not increase the reliance on those because you have to worry about their future. We have our bombers, but we're now coming into a new era of the Cruise missile. We're putting Cruise missiles on bombers and in submarines and on land-launchers in Europe. We can put it on ships. We can put it in all kinds of other modes. And therefore we can maintain a varied base, a very largely varied base from which to keep our strategic forces.

LORD: But if the land-based systems are vulnerable, and your sea systems get vulnerable, I mean, how is that a hedge against anything? I mean you've got two vulnerables, and that's worse, isn't it? SCOWCROFT: What we've done, Miss Lord, is to divide the ICBM problem into two parts--the near term part, deploying the MX missile for the reasons which I earlier described, and over the longer run, turning to a small single warhead missile, probably in a mobile configuration which will provide the kind of survivability for the land-based systems over the longer term, we feel is essential.

KALB: Mr. Monroe?

MONROE: Admiral, some Congressman now favor developing and flight-testing the MX on a sort of skeptical basis. They want to reserve judgment on whether to go ahead and build it, depending on how they see the president going in the direction of arms control and that sort of thing. What do you think about this sort of two-phase congressional approach--skeptical, saying okay, let's develop it and flight test it,

but let's hold on building it? TURNER: I think it's the worst of both worlds, in many ways. As Marvin said in his opening remarks, the Congress is likely to pass the MX with conditions. Well, that just means we haven't shown any resolve like the general wants us to show. We don't come down and say yes, we're going this way. And yet, we leave that threat dangling over everybody that we're heading for a first strike. We look irresponsible, I believe. I think it's time for the Congress to say to the president, we want a deterrent strategy, not a war fighting strategy. The MX only fits into a war fighting strategy. Let's get going on building up our Cruise missiles, our bombers, and our submarines in a purely deterrent form.

MONROE: General, what do you think about congressional approval on an iffy basis? They might not want to really build it later. SCOWCROFT: I think that the program deserves to go forward on its merits. I think that the Congress has expressed some skepticism about the administration's sincerity in supporting all parts of the commission's recommendations. I think some prudent milestones which would enable us to review our progress in arms control, progress in development of the small missile, I think could be quite acceptable.

MONROE: You'd rather, you'd like to see the Congress go ahead, presumably, unconditionally, but you'd rather see them go ahead conditionally than not at all? SCOWCROFT: I think some kind of milestone development which would enable to review the program and its effectiveness, both in arms control and development of the small missile would be quite (inaudible)....

MONROE: Why couldn't the Congress...? KALB: Mr. Neland? Mr. Neland, please?

NELAND: Gen. Scowcroft, your commission's report put heavy emphasis on three aspects, and the third would be on arms control. In theory, though, would it be possible for the United States to build a secure and invulnerable force, even without an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union. SCOWCROFT: I think it might, in theory. I think without some kind of an arms control regime, a small missile would become a very much more difficult operation. With unconstrained numbers, with the Soviets, for example, being able to deploy a SS-18 follow on, for example, with 10 warheads for every small one we deploy, you get into numbers that drive the costs up very, very substantially. I wouldn't say it would be impossible, but we think that an arms control regime is important to provide the best environment for deployment of the small missile.

KALB: Admiral, did you want to comment? TURNER: With modern technology, there are only three ways you can achieve relative invulnerability. You can try to conceal your force, like the submarines. You can put out lots of them so they're hard to hit all at once, like Cruise missiles. Or you can make the mobile, like ships and submarines and bombers. Unfortunately, the MX just doesn't fit any of these. It's an obsolete dinosaur, in effect, that deserves to be replaced by new technology, new generations of weapons.

NELAND: Former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown is noted for saying, 'We build. Then the Russians build. We don't build. Then the Russians build.' So does it really make any difference how we go about our programs? Does it make any difference whether we build the MX, in that sense? The Russians will still build. TURNER: The Russians are going to build what they think is necessary for them. We build what.... We should build what we think is necessary for us. And we have no need for this missile because we're not going to start a war, and we don't want to have a

counter-punch launch under a 30-minutes notice capability either. That's very dangerous.

KALB: Miss Lord?

LORD: General, I'm curious. In the move to de-MERV or to reduce the numbers of warheads, did the commission ever look at the possibility of upgrading Minute Man III so that we would have the capabilities of taking out hardened, or military facilities in the Soviet Union? That would accomplish one thing, which is to get rid of the 10-warhead MX and we would already have the silos ready built. SCOWCROFT: Yeah. We feel that, that that is insufficient in several respects. First of all, it would take considerably longer, a couple of years anyway, than deploying the MX. You could make, warhead for warhead, make them virtually as accurate. The numbers are not the same. And in addition, you end up still with an aging missile with no, what I would call, flexibility to respond to the Soviets in any way they will. We still, if the Soviets prove absolutely obdurate, and we need more forces, you cannot do it by that route.

LORD: Uhm. Another thing. The Midgetman missile. It's touted as sort of savior for the next decade. How practical is it to build, when recent congressional Budget Office studies show that it would be three times less expensive to just simply build more Trident submarines and put our forces under sea? SCOCROFT: We believe that it's very practical, but to develop and not to proceed ought to proceed with deliberation. If one has to deploy these in the thousands, there's no question that a single warhead missile, warhead for warhead, is more expensive than a MERV, than a many warhead missile. And a mobile missile is more expensive than one which simply sits in silos. But with the development which we think is possible, for the hardened mobile vehicle, which would enable these to be deployed on some of our larger military reservations and still not permit the Soviets to destroy them all by barraging the whole area with just a few weapons is quite practical, at reasonable cost.

KALB: We've got two minutes to go. Mr. Monroe?

MONROE: Starting with Adm. Turner, I'd like to ask each of you, if you were confined to a question that one congressman says he regards is the essential question.... This is Mr. Glickman. The question is: will the funding for MX help or hurt our own ability to reach an ultimate reduction in nuclear weapons arsenals? TURNER: I don't think it will help at all because we simply are going to be tempting the Soviets into a race. They are 75% dependent on large land-based missiles, 75% of their total nuclear force. When we start to challenge that by appearing to want to make it vulnerable, we're going to get them to build even more of those so that they will stay relatively invulnerable, I think.

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Betty Turner, Transcriber